

Linda Clair
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Transcription from Audio Recordings

File 5b – Wednesday morning discussion

Question: I've been using the pain a little bit and my body is really shaking because I was in a lot of intense pain in that last twenty minutes or so. A couple of days ago I had this intense pain in-between my shoulder blades and I didn't move, and then it sort of went into my chest and it was a little bit scary. Then it went from intense pain to – it just dissipated and it was quite beautiful. And then after that sit I was kind of chasing that a little bit because I wanted to push through the pain and feel that, because it was quite stunning what I felt afterwards. But just in that last twenty minutes it moved from my back into my sitting bones, and my whole body was shaking and really intense heat. But it feels beautiful, but I can't really say, I don't really know what it is, the words aren't fitting with the body. So I don't know whether it's sitting up the front here or...?

Linda: Well, it's a combination of everything. It's Wednesday so you've been sitting here now for four days. Sitting up the front can affect you more because being physically close tends to bring you into that more intense energy field. But you're going to be feeling it just being here, wherever you're sitting, around everyone. And really extending your pain threshold like that – the energy is going to help you to do that – and then that will inspire you, and then you can't help but want more of that. So don't see that as a bad thing, or attachment, or too much effort, or anything. I'd say, do it, go for it. That's what I used to do.

And that feeling that you do get – you don't always get, but you often do – when you break through that perceived pain threshold, where you go, "I can't do it anymore; I can't sit here anymore," and then you keep going, it's quite amazing. So I'm not saying to everyone to do this. I'm just talking to S. at the moment, and for her at the moment, do it. So don't worry about the fact that you want to feel that, because you do. And I know how it feels – it gives you this incredible inspiration and motivation to keep doing this.

So when the pain eventually goes for good, that's how it is. But that's just the tip of the iceberg. It feels incredible but when you know for sure it's just not going to come back it's quite incredible. And then you realise the pain was never really there, it was just my interpretation of it as pain. But I'm not dismissing the fact that you *do* feel incredible pain at times. But in the end you don't need the pain to feel that incredible lightness and beauty. But leading up to that, for most people, not everyone, you do, because everyone's got a different background and different factors.

Question: I haven't done a retreat since March last year so I was thinking I'm just out of practice and the pain in my back was just because I haven't sat for this long.

Linda: No.

Question: It's beautiful. Thankyou.

Question: I wanted to ask you about effort. I realised when I was walking this morning that something in me thought it could just push through to enlightenment. I think it was the fear of having to sit for lifetimes more on this chair. So I thought I'm going to have to sit here until this happens. And then something else just let go. It was like the pushing suddenly stopped pushing, or I let go of the pushing, or that perception let go. I don't know exactly. But then it was like an acceptance effort. There was effort but it was acceptance effort.

Linda: More a natural desire to make effort maybe?

Question: I don't know. It was just this sense of accepting somehow the is-ness of it. All I know is I had this amazing expanded sense of it all, and I was walking crying. It was only because the birds chirped, it brought this really deep bliss, I think my heart opened with that. So I wanted to ask you about right effort, or just effort.

Linda: Well, I think S. just described effort very well. You'd have to ask me something much more specific than that.

Question: Well, I think I got to this place of relaxed effort, if such a thing is possible.

Linda: Maybe you mean a lack of resistance to effort, because a lot of people have got a lot of resistance to effort. And there are a lot of teachers around saying you don't need to make effort. And of course I disagree with that. You have to make an incredible effort. And to get into this state that most people are in it's taken a lot of effort – nurturing the mind, the ego, thinking. So to expect to get out of that overnight without doing anything is just ridiculous. Well, in my feeling it's ridiculous. Of course some people say, "No, the effort gets in the way." But I think it's the resistance to the fact that you do need to make effort that gets in the way. And effort, in my view, is needed.

You were talking about pushing. It's not really pushing effort, there's a fine line between pushing and just pushing against a brick wall, and extending yourself and looking at your pain threshold and seeing how relative that is and how personal that is and how fixed that is. And when you look closely at it, of course you can keep sitting for another five minutes.

Question: Because the effort didn't stop, there was just a different quality to it.

Linda: Well, I'd say you stopped resisting the effort, the fact that you need to make effort.

Question: Well, that took ten retreats.

Linda: Well, it's worth it just to see that.

Question: I absolutely agree.

Question: I was extremely moved by your response to S.'s sharing there. If you'd shared those symptoms in a doctor's surgery he would have had an X-ray machine and probably the scalpel out, and perhaps a few other things. You spoke to her and you said it was for her personally. Am I right to understand that you weren't basing your reply on your long experience with these things but that you *knew* that was the answer for her now? Is that correct?

Linda: Yes, but it's from my own experience too.

Question: But more that symptoms in a doctor's surgery don't *always* mean, they probably mean something but not always, but you spoke with a certainty.

Linda: Yes. So two people can say the same thing and I might reply in a very different way. So what happens, or what I feel happening now, is that when someone is speaking I *listen*. And that's what happens in this state, you start to really listen. And you don't listen with the intellect because there is virtually no intellect there now. You really, really listen with your body. And often when someone is talking, the words are relevant to a degree, but it's more what's behind the words that I hear and I feel. And often a response starts to develop as they're talking, not, "I'm going to say this." The response starts to form as the person is speaking often, not because of what they're saying but where it's coming from. It's this incredible play between us where energetically it's just moving and connecting and there's just this incredible intimacy there too. So that's what happens, but listening is definitely an art. And it starts to naturally happen with this because you stop wanting to project your view and wanting to compete with the other person. Instead you're totally there for them. So someone is speaking – you just sit there and listen in a non-judgmental way and just feel where they're coming from. And if everyone operated like this the world would be a completely different place. And that's why this is so important.

Question: I've had a bit of turmoil since yesterday afternoon. I've been sitting of course but finding it quite hard to just see the thought, back to the breath, on and on and on. But just in the last sit I found that without me seeming to do anything the thoughts would be running along and it was like a little window would open. I felt like I hadn't done anything but a gap or a space happened and I couldn't tell how long it was, and then thoughts would start up again. That happened several times and something in me has relaxed. It's like I feel that what I thought was really hard was really necessary, that grinding away that I've been doing.

Linda: Yes, it can feel like you're not getting anywhere. And it's just this, "How long is this going to last? I've been doing this for years." And it doesn't appear that there have been results. Of course there have but it's very easy to forget about results and how you've changed. And sometimes it is good to look at how you might have reacted to something six months, a year ago, two years ago and acknowledge how differently you're reacting to something now or how quickly you're letting something go. So it's good to be challenged, particularly by life events, that you can use either way. You can use to see something more deeply about yourself and just see your reaction to something. Or you can just blame the event and say, "Oh, that's getting in the way, that's what is causing my suffering." So I'm not sure if that's what's happened with you?

Question: A bit of both has been happening.

Linda: And you can't help but see both, but then you take hold of it – and I know you will – and use it. So really use it. And that happens more and more. And one of the advantages that I can see about being enlightened and still being in the world and functioning and doing your own stuff is that you do get challenged more. You're not in this protected environment. And you tend, I feel, maybe to be a bit more balanced and use certain stresses in your life that you just have to deal with, that you can't ignore, as a way of seeing what residual past is there. And as far as I can see, and I often say that, that goes on forever; there are certain things that are always needing attention and you

don't reach this perfect state. But there can be this tendency to think, "Oh, I should be perfect. I've reacted to that and I shouldn't have reacted." Whereas it was quite a natural reaction based, on what happened with you, on love and compassion. So just keep going, keep grinding away. And often during a retreat you're not going to see so clearly what's happened because you're so immersed in this environment and it just become your whole world. It's when you leave that you start to see what has happened, in the months after, what has changed and what has happened. And it appears in different ways.

Linda: So I just wanted to talk a bit about the walking. This morning in the Qi Gong class P. did a demonstration of walking, the sort of walking that he's been trained to do. He told me about it a few years ago and I've been doing it since then, although he gave a few more specific instructions this morning. So I've been practicing it this morning, and also watching how other people walk and how P. walks. And it's really good and I can really recommend it.

I don't know if the people in the class this morning tried it when they were walking? And maybe P. should demonstrate? Tell me if I'm doing it incorrectly. I've been walking with both hands on my lower abdomen. Most people tend to walk – and I used to do this – heel to toe, heel to toe. But this practice is allowing the front of your foot to come down first, and using the back foot to propel forwards. Once you start to get used to it it's like your feet work together and it becomes a bit more natural, and probably ninety-nine percent of your attention is on your feet. You're still breathing of course and having your hands on your belly can help that. But you tend to feel this incredible sensation in your feet and the whole foot is touching the floor, it's not just a bit of your foot at one time. So you propel forward and sink into the whole of the foot, and feel the whole foot touching the floor, and lift. I think that has made a difference, not pointing the toe down (as you step forward) but letting the front of the foot hang downwards, just with gravity. Really feeling that solidity and groundedness. It's made a huge difference for me for walking. You can feel very, very energised. And I did after the qi Gong this morning too, and after the walking and then sitting again. So yes, try it out.

Question: In the last sit I've been really watching the movement of awareness and I know if my spine collapses I go into thoughts and get lost in dreaming, then I straighten up and I'm clear again and present. But then the awareness of whether I'm straight or collapsed is another awareness. And of course when I have a long sit and it's very intense, then everything slows down and speeds up at the same time. Then the awareness is very strong because I'm working with extreme sensation. But then I just get lost in dreams again, and come back. It feels like this quagmire of going in and out of awareness and being aware of myself going in and out of awareness.

Linda: Are you using the counting at all?

Question: I am, and I'm really trying to stay strongly with the body and the counting, on and off.

Linda: That can help a bit at times with the quagmire that you tend to get into, but that's just going to happen sometimes. So I'd say maybe soften a bit when it gets too messy like that. Count the breath – that can make it a little bit more defined, a bit sharper. And if your back is crooked, just straighten it up; become very, very aware of your posture. And also do the walking. Are you okay?

Question: No, I'm good, actually I'm really good. It's just all this noticing, it's constant, like you talk about in daily life, and watching the mind. Even though here there's not much happening, but

because the energy builds up so intense just a little event and I can almost see the happening, and then the tentacles of ego and mind that come along with an event.

Linda: When is this ever going to end?

Question: Yes, like when you talk about but this pure living intuitively.

Linda: It does happen eventually but I felt the same as you for a long time. It just felt, "When is this ever going to end?" It felt like this endless... Like the tentacles – you'd see one thing and you'd clear it up and they'd be something else and something else. My teacher used to say, "You witness yourself out of existence." And it's a really good. It always struck me, and I've always remembered that. And it's true; you just keep going back and back and back. But you have to be *very* careful to stay grounded. You're sitting like that and that's a very grounded position, you are grounded anyway. So just keep going. That's all I can say. Just keep going.

Question: I see like I'm sitting in a bath of mud looking for the key and the key is the fact that I'm just sitting in a bath of mud.

Linda: Yes, just sit in that bath of mud at those times, and when you see a glimmer of a gap get into that. It will clear, but the more you push it the more muddy it can get. And then you can feel quite emotional, upset, because you just want to feel clear and you're putting all this effort in but it's still muddy. Sometimes when it's like that it's like a thick fog and you just have to sit with it, waiting as little as possible. But in a way that's what it is, just sitting with it till it clears. There's no way you can push it away. So it's just deep murky resistance that needs to be there – it does need to be there – it's not that you're doing anything wrong. It's that you're really getting into this and at times it will be like that. And it's not because you're not doing things correctly or right, it's because you are, and there are layers of that that will come through.

So just sit with it. Don't fight it. It feels awful but then when the pain does come and it is quite sharp and it keeps you alert you do appreciate it much more. Because you can't stand that murkiness, which is how most people live their lives in that fog, never being clear. But one day the fog will clear and it will clear at times during this. But it does make you appreciate the more intense sensations that you get and be more willing to put up with them, because you have to prefer that, that sharpness and awake-ness, to anything. And you've got to be prepared to do anything for it. So it's like this contrast, and even though it feels awful at the time it is contributing to the whole thing in that way.

And it's great to talk about things like that, particularly publicly, because it clears it up to a degree and I'm sure you're not the only one feeling that at times. So another thing that you can tend to feel is, "I've been doing this so long and I'm still in this murky fog of thinking," but it's really no indication of where you are in this whole process, and it is a process. So just sit with it, but don't fight it.

Question: We talked about pushing through the pain. How about pushing through exhaustion? Because yesterday, in the afternoon break, I went to my room and I crashed on the bed and I was feeling so exhausted, I did not move anything for twenty minutes. And then I thought, "Should I miss the next sit or should I go anyway?" And I was thinking that maybe it was resistance and I should come – and I did – or maybe just resting my body would help me with the sit after. So I

wasn't sure which way to go. So is it a case of pushing through fatigue the same way you push through pain?

Linda: Well, I don't say, "Push through pain," I say, "Extend your pain threshold." So there is a slight difference to pushing through it. With the fatigue you never know. How did you feel when you came and sat?

Question: Yes, good.

Linda: So, you just never know. You've got to give yourself the choice though. You have to say, "Well, I could lie down." And it doesn't bother me if you go and lie down. I'm not going to say, "Bad girl." It's up to you. So you take responsibility for it and try different things. And if you had a rest, who knows, but you didn't – you came in and it was fine. So you've got to know that those sorts of things are up to you. It's not black and white, and it changes. If you're not feeling very well, maybe have a rest. But then you've just got to be careful it doesn't turn into, "Oh, I'm sick, I've got to have a rest," if you're not really sick. I mean if you're really sick, sure.

Question: Actually I got a clue afterwards, because after dinner I went for a walk and I had plenty of energy during the walk, but then the idea of coming back for the last sit – I was like, "Oh, no." So I could tell then it was real resistance.

Linda: So just try different things. But you came back and it was fine.

I'm like that with yoga. 😊 I know it's good for me but I find it really difficult to go, even when M. is teaching and she is so good!

Question: She was missing out on her afternoon nana-nap.

Linda: During retreats, and often not during retreats, if you're doing this practice it gets incredibly tiring. And I know for years, when I could, I used to have a bit of a nap in the afternoon. At first it did feel a bit strange, but I got used to it and it really helped me. And it might only be for five minutes, might have been for twenty minutes, but just that time where I wasn't doing anything, and maybe not even trying to get to sleep but just resting. It would help me through the rest of the day and just help me survive, because it's a different sort of tiredness. It's a very different sort of tiredness – it's not purely physical – it's partly physical but it's this energetic tiredness; dealing with that energy is tiring. So having a nap is really good. And that's why we have quite a bit of a break at lunchtime. Doesn't matter how old you are, how young you are, everyone feels it.